## THE NAVAJO NATION



## BEN SHELLY PRESIDENT REX LEE JIM VICE PRESIDENT

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## President Shelly Signs Emergency Declaration for Frozen Water Systems

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz**. – Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly signed a resolution declaring a state of emergency for the Navajo Nation because of water shortages.

"I am signing this resolution because we need to access emergency services to help our people who have been without water. We have waterlines that need repair, water storage containers that need to be replenished, and we need man power to help repairs the water systems that have been damaged," President Shelly said.

President Shelly signed the resolution late Friday afternoon after the Commission on Emergency Management voted unanimously to pass the resolution.

As many as 2,000 homes in the Window Rock area have been affected by waterline breakage due to the subfreezing temperatures experienced for the past several weeks. Temperatures have been as cold as -25 degrees Fahrenheit during the past few weeks, while only warming into the teens.

Due to the cold temperatures, large waterlines have been freezing. As Navajo Tribal Utility Authority unfroze the large waterlines, the pressure created from the water broke other smaller lines that lead to homes and residences.

Frozen and broken waterlines, however, have compounded into low water pressure issues for residents and communities that do have water. Water storage tanks are low due to broken waterlines. The resolution calls for residents to conserve water so water storage containers can replenish themselves and restore water pressure.

"We have always been a resourceful people. Now we need to all come together and conserve water while our water system is repair and our storages are replenished with water. We can do small things like turn off water while we brush our teeth, using towels more than once, or only washing clothing when needed," President Shelly said.

The resolution allows the Navajo Nation to activate emergency resources to "restore and sustain vital community infrastructure."

Communities throughout the Navajo Nation have water systems affected by freezing temperatures. Pinedale, Crownpoint, Shiprock, Kayenta, Chinle, Dilkon, and others have all reported water outages or low water pressure.

"I am asking our people to be patient as we tackle this problem," President Shelly said.

NTUA authorities said that their work crews have been working 15 hours a day and up to 70 hours a week for the past several weeks.

"This resolution allows us to ask for help for extra man power to tackle these water issues that are happening throughout the Navajo Nation," President Shelly said.

Public Safety Director John Billison said an emergency operations center will be established by early next week.

"We need to make sure our emergency contingency plans are followed and that we have a central command post where we can structurally organize our teams responding to this emergency," Billison said.

Navajo Engineering and Constructing Authority (NECA) have been assisting NTUA with repairing waterlines. Indian Health Services has allocated resources to help with the emergency.

"We are working together and with other agencies. As we move forward, we are going to work with more agencies to get our people the help they need as we work to bring water back into their homes. We are a resourceful people and we will endure through these times," President Shelly said.

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